Knowledge Issues In The Matrix

The Matrix is a movie which brings up many philosophical points and challenges the audience’s idea of knowing. One of the biggest questions asked in the movie is “How do we know what is real?”  
  
So how do we know that what we are experiencing right now, what we call life is real? The entire movie challenges our preconceptions of reality. One of the moments in which this is shown is when Neo thinks his first contact with the agents is all a vivid dream… but isn’t. He only believed it was because he assumes things like that cannot happen in real life.

Neo is often confronted with situations where he has no idea as to whether or not it is reality. Take for example, The Matrix program. Neo ‘exits’ the program… But how can he know that the world he is perceiving is real? How can he know that the world he is now in isn’t still a part of The Matrix? To answer that we look at the four ways of knowing. Sense perception, Language, Emotion, and Logic/Reasoning.  
  
Looking at sense perception, Neo’s reality, The Matrix, could be called real. Every sense that he has is affected in the exact same way in the brain, stimulating it and making him feel the effects of what he does in The Matrix. It is a simulation… But you will never be able to tell it is because your brain can not tell the difference between the ‘fake’ and the ‘real’ signals.  
  
Looking at logic/reasoning however, we can choose to say that the simulation is NOT real. It produces the same reaction at a mental level, however, physically, you are not doing the things you do in The Matrix. Therefore it is an illusion.

Other moments when these knowledge issues are brought up include when Neo and Morpheus are in The Construct and when Neo mistakes various real life situations for dreams.

Morpheus: “What is ‘real’? How do you define ‘real’? If you're talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, what you can taste and see, then ‘real’ is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain...”

Another interesting issue is the question of what is bad about being in The Matrix. Is it better to live inside it, or better to see things as they really are? Is ignorance really bliss? Cypher definitely thought so.

Effectively, the movie is asking us, how do we know what we perceive is real? And the answer is, we don’t. There is no reliable way to know if we are/aren’t in The Matrix as we breathe this very moment.